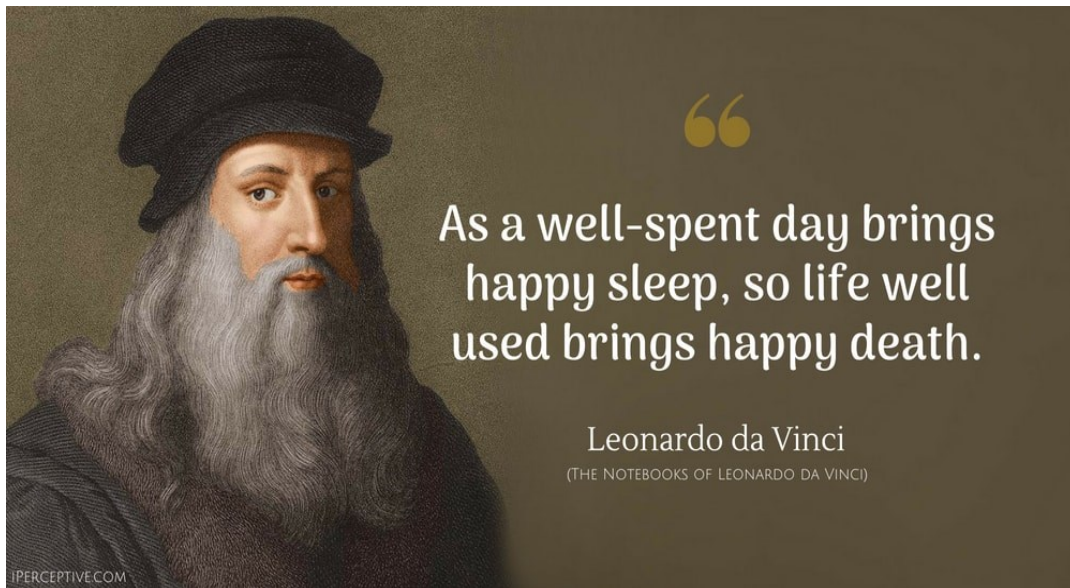


108
Greatest Of All Times



Globally selected
Personalities



15 Apl 1452 <::><::><::> 2 May 1519

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Compiled by:
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14 Apl 1452



2 May 1519

Leonardo da Vinci (born April 15, 1452, Anchiano, near Vinci, Republic of Florence [Italy]—died May 2, 1519, Cloux [now Clos-Lucé], France) was an Italian painter, draftsman, sculptor, architect, and engineer whose skill and intelligence, perhaps more than that of any other figure, epitomized the Renaissance humanist ideal.

His Last Supper (1495–98) and Mona Lisa (c. 1503–19) are among the most widely popular and influential paintings of the Renaissance. His notebooks reveal a spirit of scientific inquiry and a mechanical inventiveness that were centuries ahead of their time.

<https://leonardoda-vinci.org/biography.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci



Leonardo da Vinci

<https://www.mos.org/leonardo/biography.html>

The illegitimate son of a 25-year-old notary, Ser Piero, and a peasant girl, Caterina, Leonardo was born on April 15, 1452, in Vinci, Italy, just outside Florence. His father took custody of him shortly after his birth.

Growing up in his father's Vinci home, Leonardo had access to scholarly texts owned by family and friends. He was also exposed to Vinci's longstanding painting tradition, and when he was about 15 his father apprenticed him to the renowned workshop of Andrea del Verrochio in Florence. Even as an apprentice, Leonardo demonstrated his great talent. Indeed, his genius seems to appear in a number of pieces produced by the Verrocchio's workshop from the period 1470 to 1475. For example, one of Leonardo's first big breaks was to paint an angel in Verrocchio's "Baptism of Christ," and Leonardo was so much better than his master's that Verrocchio allegedly resolved never to paint again. Leonardo stayed in the Verrocchio workshop until 1477.

Seeking to make a living, and new challenges, he entered the service of the Duke of Milan in 1482, abandoning his first commission in Florence, "The Adoration of the Magi". He spent 17 years in Milan, leaving only after Duke Ludovico Sforza's fall from power in 1499. It was during these years that Leonardo reached new heights of scientific and artistic achievement.

The Duke kept Leonardo busy painting and sculpting and designing elaborate court festivals, but he also had Leonardo design weapons, buildings, and machinery. From 1485 to 1490, Leonardo produced studies on many subjects, including nature, flying machines, geometry, mechanics, municipal construction, canals and architecture (designing everything from churches to fortresses). His studies from this period contain designs for advanced weapons, including a tank and other war vehicles, various combat devices, and even submarines. Also during this period, Leonardo produced his first anatomical studies. His Milan workshop was abuzz with apprentices and students.

Unfortunately, Leonardo's interests were so broad, and he was so often compelled by new subjects, that he usually left projects unfinished. As a result, he only completing about six works in these 17 years, including "The Last Supper"

and "The Virgin on the Rocks," leaving dozens of paintings and projects unfinished or unrealized (see "Big Horse" in sidebar). He spent most of his time studying science, either by going out into nature and observing things or by locking himself away in his workshop cutting up bodies or pondering universal truths.

Between 1490 and 1495 he developed his habit of recording his studies in meticulously illustrated notebooks. His work covered four main themes: painting, architecture, the elements of mechanics, and human anatomy. These studies and sketches were collected into various codices and manuscripts, which are now collected by museums and individuals (Bill Gates once paid \$30 million for the Codex Leicester!).

Back to Milan — after Ludovico Sforza's fall from power in 1499 — Leonardo searched for a new patron. Over the next 16 years, Leonardo worked and travelled throughout Italy for a number of employers, including the infamous Cesare Borgia. He traveled for a year with Borgia's army as a military engineer and even met Niccolo Machiavelli, author of "The Prince." Leonardo designed a bridge to span the "golden horn" in Constantinople during this period and received a commission, with the help of Machiavelli, to paint the "Battle of Anghiari."

About 1503, Leonardo reportedly began work on the "Mona Lisa." From 1513 to 1516, he worked in Rome, maintaining a workshop and undertaking a variety of projects for the Pope. He continued his studies of human anatomy and physiology, but the Pope forbade him from dissecting cadavers, limiting his progress.

Following the death of his patron Giuliano de' Medici in March of 1516, he was offered the title of Premier Painter and Engineer and Architect of the King by Francis I in France. His last and perhaps most generous patron, Francis I provided Leonardo with a stipend and manor house near the royal chateau at Amboise.

Although suffering from a paralysis of the right hand, Leonardo (who wrote with his left-handed) was still able to draw and teach. He produced studies for the Virgin Mary from "The Virgin and Child with St. Anne", studies of cats, horses, dragons, St. George, anatomical studies, studies on the nature of water, drawings of the Deluge, and of various machines.

Leonardo died on May 2, 1519 in Cloux, France. Legend has it that King Francis was at his side when he died, cradling Leonardo's head in his arms.

Mona Lisa



<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mona-Lisa-painting>

Leonardo da Vinci began painting the *Mona Lisa* about 1503, and it was in his studio when he died in 1519. He likely worked on it intermittently over several years, adding multiple layers of thin oil glazes at different times. Small cracks in the paint, called craquelure, appear throughout the whole piece, but they are finer on the hands, where the thinner glazes correspond to Leonardo's late period.

French King [Francis I](#), in whose court Leonardo spent the last years of his life, [acquired](#) the work after the artist's death, and it became part of the royal collection. For centuries the portrait was secluded in French palaces, until insurgents claimed the royal collection as the property of the people during the [French Revolution](#) (1787–99). Following a period hanging in [Napoleon's](#) bedroom, the *Mona Lisa* was installed in the [Louvre Museum](#) at the turn of the 19th century.

In 1911 the painting was stolen, causing an immediate media sensation. People flocked to the Louvre to view the empty space where the painting had once hung, the museum's director of paintings resigned, and the poet [Guillaume Apollinaire](#) and artist [Pablo Picasso](#) were even arrested as suspects. Two years later an art dealer in [Florence](#) alerted local authorities

that a man had tried to sell him the painting. Police found the portrait stashed in the false bottom of a trunk belonging to Vincenzo Peruggia, an Italian immigrant who had briefly worked at the Louvre fitting glass on a selection of paintings, including the *Mona Lisa*. He and possibly two other workers had hidden in a closet overnight, taken the portrait from the wall the morning of August 21, 1911, and run off without [suspicion](#). Peruggia was arrested, tried, and imprisoned, while the *Mona Lisa* took a tour of Italy before making its triumphant return to France.

During [World War II](#) the *Mona Lisa*, singled out as the most-endangered artwork in the Louvre, was evacuated to various locations in France's countryside, returning to the museum in 1945 after peace had been declared. It later traveled to the [United States](#) in 1963, drawing about 40,000 people per day during its six-week stay at the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) in [New York City](#) and at the [National Gallery of Art](#) in [Washington, D.C.](#) It also toured to [Tokyo](#) and [Moscow](#) in 1974.

Scholars have noted that the *Mona Lisa* is in fairly good condition for its age. The poplar panel shows some evidence of warping from resistance to its original frame and to braces added by early restorers. To prevent the widening of a small crack, visible near the centre of the upper edge of the painting, dovetails were added to the back of the painting. Restorers later pasted heavy canvas over the crack and replaced the top dovetail.

The glass protecting the *Mona Lisa* was replaced with a bulletproof case after several attacks in 1956, one of which damaged an area near the subject's left elbow. The *Mona Lisa* thus escaped harm from acts of vandalism in 1974 during the work's visit to Tokyo and in 2009 when a museumgoer threw a ceramic mug at it.

[The Mona Lisa and its influence](#)

The influence of the *Mona Lisa* on the Renaissance and later times has been enormous, revolutionizing contemporary portrait painting. Not only did the three-quarter pose become the standard, but also Leonardo's preliminary drawings encouraged other artists to make more and freer studies for their paintings and stimulated connoisseurs to collect those drawings. Through the drawings, his Milanese works were made known to the Florentines. Also, his reputation and stature as an artist and thinker spread to his fellow artists and assured for them a freedom of action and

thought similar to his own. One such painter was the young Raphael, who sketched Leonardo's work in progress and adopted the Mona Lisa format for his portraits; it served as a clear model for his Portrait of Maddalena Doni (c. 1506).

Leonardo even influenced the fashion in which artists dressed their subjects. In his Treatise on Painting, published long after his death, he wrote that art should avoid the fashion:

As far as possible avoid the costumes of your own day....Costumes of our period should not be depicted unless it be on tombstones, so that we may be spared being laughed at by our successors for the mad fashions of men and leave behind only things that may be admired for their dignity and beauty.

The Mona Lisa demonstrates this aspect of his treatise perfectly in that La Giaconda is dressed in a coloured shift, loosely pleated at the neck, instead of the tight clothes that were then popular.

Film: Mona Lisa



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Neil Jordan
Written by	Neil Jordan David Leland
Produced by	Stephen Woolley
Starring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bob Hoskins • Cathy Tyson • Robbie Coltrane • Michael Caine
Cinematography	Roger Pratt
Edited by	Lesley Walker
Music by	Michael Kamen
Production company	HandMade Films
Distributed by	Palace Pictures ^[1]
Release dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 June 1986 (US) • 19 September 1986 (UK)
Running time	104 minutes
Country	United Kingdom
Language	English
Budget	£2 million ^[2] or £2.4 million ^[3]
Box office	£4,107,000 (UK) ^[3]

Mona Lisa is a 1986 British neo-noir [crime drama film](#) about an ex-convict who becomes entangled in the dangerous life of a high-class [call girl](#). The film was written by [Neil Jordan](#) and [David Leland](#), and directed by Jordan. It was produced by [HandMade Films](#) and stars [Bob Hoskins](#), [Cathy Tyson](#), and [Michael Caine](#).

The film was nominated for multiple awards, and Bob Hoskins was nominated for several awards for his performance (including the [Academy Award for Best Actor](#)), winning the [Golden Globe Award for Best Actor - Motion Picture Drama](#) and [BAFTA Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role](#). The film seems to take its title from the song [Mona Lisa](#) heard during the end credits.

SOME Pictures





Some important Web Links

<https://www.britannica.com/list/10-famous-artworks-by-leonardo-da-vinci>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_works_by_Leonardo_da_Vinci

<https://www.artrenewal.org/artists/leonardo-da-vinci/186>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcLqoVRDPqw> **[Video]**

TimeLINE

1452: ·Leonardo born on April 15, in Vinci. Leonardo was born to Ser Piero, a notary, and Caterina, a peasant girl; his parents were never married.

1467: ·Leonardo becomes an apprentice to Andrea del Verrocchio, in Florence. This date is an estimate, the apprenticeship could have begun a year or two later. But even 1467 would have been a bit late according to the customs of the time: Leonardo would have been fifteen, and most apprentices began at a younger age.

1469: ·Lorenzo and Giuliano de Medici become new rulers of Florence. The two brothers took over when their father died. 1469 also marks the birth of Machiavelli, who would be an important advisor to Lorenzo and later write the work of political philosophy entitled *The Prince* (1515).

1472: ·Leonardo becomes a member of the Florence painters' guild. Birth of Copernicus. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is published. Other famous painters to join the painters' guild in 1472 were Botticelli and Perugino.

1473: ·Leonardo draws a landscape on the Feast of Santa Maria delle Neve. This is his earliest known drawing, though he probably also had a hand in Verrocchio's *Baptism of Christ*, which probably reached completion in or around 1473.

1475: ·Michelangelo born

1476: ·Leonardo charged with sodomy on April 9; the case is dismissed June 16.

1477: ·Leonardo had at least some part in the painting the *Annunciation to the Virgin*, completed around this time.

1478: ·The Pazzi family tries to assassinate Lorenzo and Giuliano de Medici. Lorenzo survives; Giuliano does not. This same year, Leonardo writes in his notebooks that he has begun "two Virgin Marys." He also paints the *Portrait of Ginevra de Benci* around this time.

1481: ·Leonardo receives a commission to paint the *Adoration of the Magi*. The painting was never completed, yet was-and is-considered a

masterpiece. This same year, most of the other noteworthy painters in Florence were sent to Rome to work on projects for the Pope.

1482: ·Leonardo moves from Florence to Milan, entering the patronage of Ludovico Sforza. By this time, Leonardo is writing in his notebooks regularly.

1483: ·Leonardo receives a commission to paint the *Virgin of the Rocks*. Also, Raphael is born in 1483.

1485: ·Plague in Milan; Titian born.

1488: ·Verrochio dies.

1489: ·Leonardo studies anatomy.

1490: ·Leonardo begins work in earnest on the bronze horse for his patron Ludovico Sforza. Leonardo begins a book on landscape and hydraulic works; it is never finished. Salai enters his household at the age of 10.

1492: ·Lorenzo de Medici dies; Columbus goes to the New World.

1493: ·A woman named Caterina, possibly Leonardo's mother, possibly a servant, becomes a member of his household in Milan.

1494: ·Savonarola takes power in Florence.

1495: ·Leonardo begins his *Last Supper* in the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie.

1496: ·Leonardo illustrates mathematician Fra Luca Pacioli's *De divina proportione*.

1498: ·Leonardo decorates the walls and ceiling of the Sala delle Asse. He also made his first attempts at planning a flying machine around this time. In 1498, Savonarola is burned at the stake.

1499: ·The French army conquers Milan; Leonardo leaves.

1500: ·Leonardo and Pacioli go to Mantua, then Leonardo continues on to Florence. In Mantua, he draws the *Portrait in Profile of Isabelle d'Este*. In Florence, he paints the *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*.

1502: ·Leonardo becomes Cesare Borgia's military engineer. Leonardo travels around the Romagna, inspecting fortifications. He meets Machiavelli.

1503: ·Back in Florence, Leonardo begins the *Battle of Anghiari*. Also, in 1503 Florence tries to divert the Arno River away from Pisa in order

to defeat Pisa in war. Leonardo and Machiavelli may have cooperated on this project.

1504: ·On July 9, Ser Piero dies.

1505: ·Leonardo makes a second attempt to build a flying machine and begins sketches for the *Mona Lisa*, which he completes sometime later. In 1505, Leonardo gives up on the *Battle of Anghiari*, which is deteriorating as he works on it.

1506: ·In May, Leonardo is summoned to Milan by Charles d'Amboise, the French governor.

1507: ·Leonardo is appointed Louis XII's painter and engineer. He paints a second version of the *Virgin of the Rocks*. He meets his beautiful young assistant, Francesco Melzi. Also, he travels to Florence in a lawsuit against his brothers of his inheritance from his uncle Francesco.

1508: ·Michelangelo begins work on the Sistine Chapel frescoes.

1511: ·Vasari born.

1513: ·Leonardo moves to Rome. Living in the Vatican, he studies the properties of mirrors. It is perhaps at this time that he paints the Turin Self-portrait. It was in this year that Leo X (Medici) became pope; the previous year the Medici family returned to power in Florence.

1515: ·Around this time, Leonardo paints the painting *John the Baptist*. He also constructs a mechanical lion for the coronation of the new king of France, Francis I.

1516: ·Leonardo permanently leaves Italy for France, where he will serve Francis I in his court in Amboise.

1519: ·In May, Leonardo dies at Cloux.



HIS Quotable QUOTES

Leonardo da Vinci believed that life gains meaning through love and well-spent days, emphasizing the importance of appreciating every aspect of life. His short quotes on art reveal his profound understanding of the craft, noting that art is never truly finished and that a painter holds the universe in their mind and hands. Leonardo da Vinci most famous quotes also shared insights on knowledge, emphasizing the perpetual nature of learning and the interconnectedness of all things. He believed that experience is a powerful teacher and that wisdom is born from it. Overall, Famous quotes by Leonardo da Vinci reflect his deep contemplation on life, art, and knowledge, offering timeless insights that continue to resonate with people worldwide.

Best Leonardo da Vinci Quotes About Life

Here are the best motivational quotes of Leonardo da Vinci on Life:

1. "Life without love, is no life at all."
2. "As a well-spent day brings happy sleep, so life well used brings happy death."
3. "Life well spent is long."
4. "While I thought that I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die."
5. "Our life is made by the death of others."
6. "Not to appreciate life, all of life, is not to deserve it."
7. "People reveal themselves completely only when they are thrown out of the customary conditions of their life."
8. "In time and with water, everything changes."
9. "Just as a well-filled day brings blessed sleep, so a well-employed life brings a blessed death."
10. "Life is pretty simple: You do some stuff. Most fails. Some works. You do more of what works."

Best Leonardo da Vinci Inspirational Quotes on Art

Here are the best motivational quotes of Leonardo da Vinci on Art and Teachings:

1. "Art is never finished, only abandoned."
2. "The painter has the Universe in his mind and hands."
3. "Painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt, and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen."
4. "A painter should begin every canvas with a wash of black, because all things in nature are dark except where exposed by the light."
5. "There is no object so large but that at a great distance from the eye it does not appear smaller than a smaller object near."
6. "Beauty perishes in life, but is immortal in art."
7. "Art lives from constraints and dies from freedom."
8. "A beautiful body perishes, but a work of art does not."
9. "Poor is the pupil who does not surpass his master."
10. "You can have no dominion greater or less than that over yourself."

Leonardo da Vinci Quotes about Art and Science

1. "Art is never finished, only abandoned."
2. "The painter tries to master color, while the chef has mastered taste."
3. "Learning never exhausts the mind."
4. "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."
5. "Where the spirit does not work with the hand, there is no art."
6. "Study without desire spoils the memory, and it retains nothing that it takes in."
7. "Nature is the source of all true knowledge. She has her own logic, her own laws, she has no effect without cause nor invention without necessity."
8. "The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding."
9. "Art is the queen of all sciences communicating knowledge to all the generations of the world."
10. "The human foot is a masterpiece of engineering and a work of art."

Famous Quotes of Leonardo da Vinci Quotes About Learning

Here are the best motivational quotes of Leonardo da Vinci on Learning and Knowledge:

1. "Learning never exhausts the mind."
2. "The knowledge of all things is possible."

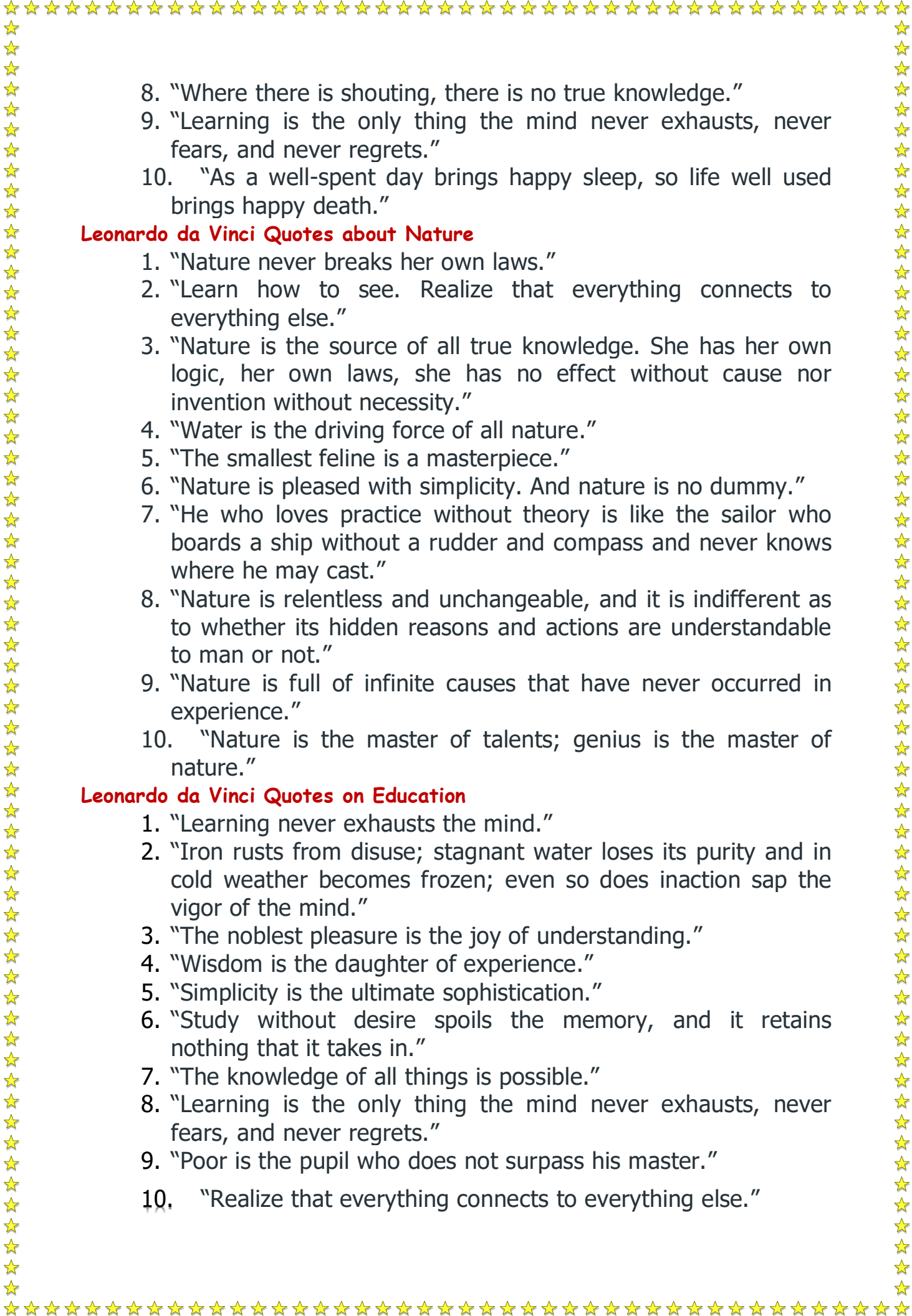
3. "Study without desire spoils the memory, and it retains nothing that it takes in."
4. "Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets."
5. "All our knowledge has its origin in our perceptions."
6. "The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding."
7. "Wisdom is the daughter of experience."
8. "Every action needs to be prompted by a motive."
9. "Realize that everything connects to everything else."
10. "Experience does not err. Only your judgments err by expecting from her what is not in her power."

Leonardo da Vinci Quotes about Marriage

1. "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."
2. "Where there is shouting, there is no true knowledge."
3. "The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinions."
4. "Learning never exhausts the mind."
5. "Art is never finished, only abandoned."
6. "Water is the driving force of all nature."
7. "He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards a ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast."
8. "Study the science of art. Study the art of science. Develop your senses – especially learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else."
9. "The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding."
10. "The function of muscle is to pull and not to push, except in the case of the genitals and the tongue."

Leonardo da Vinci Quotes about Love

1. "Love shows itself more in adversity than in prosperity; as light does, which shines most where the place is darkest."
2. "The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinions."
3. "Life well spent is long."
4. "He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards a ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast."
5. "Love is like fever which comes and goes quite independently of the will. ... there are no age limits for love."
6. "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."
7. "It had long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things."

- 
8. "Where there is shouting, there is no true knowledge."
 9. "Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets."
 10. "As a well-spent day brings happy sleep, so life well used brings happy death."

Leonardo da Vinci Quotes about Nature

1. "Nature never breaks her own laws."
2. "Learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else."
3. "Nature is the source of all true knowledge. She has her own logic, her own laws, she has no effect without cause nor invention without necessity."
4. "Water is the driving force of all nature."
5. "The smallest feline is a masterpiece."
6. "Nature is pleased with simplicity. And nature is no dummy."
7. "He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards a ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast."
8. "Nature is relentless and unchangeable, and it is indifferent as to whether its hidden reasons and actions are understandable to man or not."
9. "Nature is full of infinite causes that have never occurred in experience."
10. "Nature is the master of talents; genius is the master of nature."

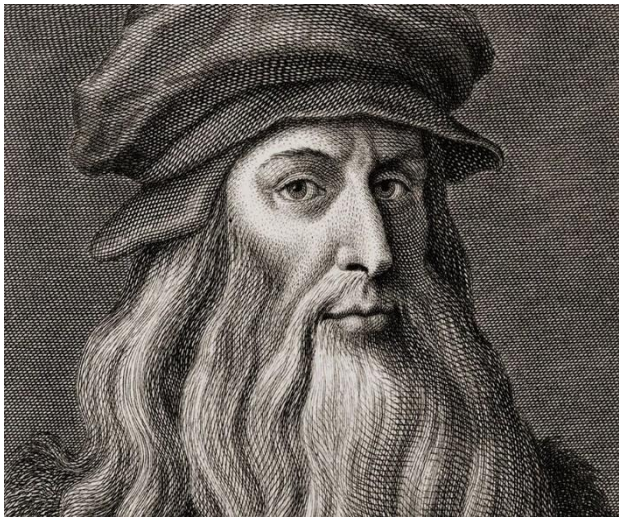
Leonardo da Vinci Quotes on Education

1. "Learning never exhausts the mind."
2. "Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind."
3. "The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding."
4. "Wisdom is the daughter of experience."
5. "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."
6. "Study without desire spoils the memory, and it retains nothing that it takes in."
7. "The knowledge of all things is possible."
8. "Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets."
9. "Poor is the pupil who does not surpass his master."
10. "Realize that everything connects to everything else."

TEN Famous Artworks by Leonardo da Vinci

<https://www.britannica.com/list/10-famous-artworks-by-leonardo-da-vinci>

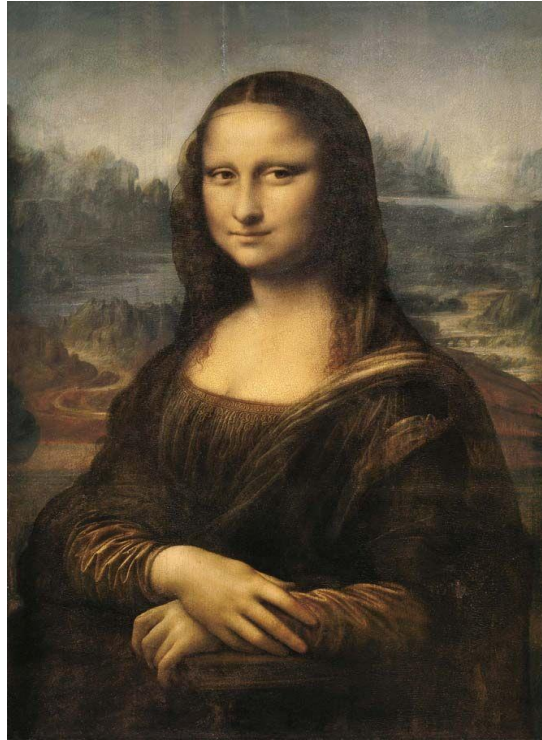
One of the great Renaissance painters, Leonardo da Vinci continually tested artistic traditions and techniques. He created innovative compositions, investigated anatomy to



accurately represent the human body, considered the human psyche to illustrate character, and experimented with methods of representing space and three-dimensional

objects on a two-dimensional surface. The result of his inexhaustible curiosity is many unfinished projects but also some of the most lifelike, complex, and tender representations of human nature. His experiments influenced the art of his successors and often became the standard of representation in subsequent centuries. At his death in 1519, Leonardo left many notebooks filled with jottings and sketches but very few finished works. Some of his pieces were completed by assistants, but others were lost, destroyed, or overpainted. Below are 10 examples of some of his most well-known surviving works.

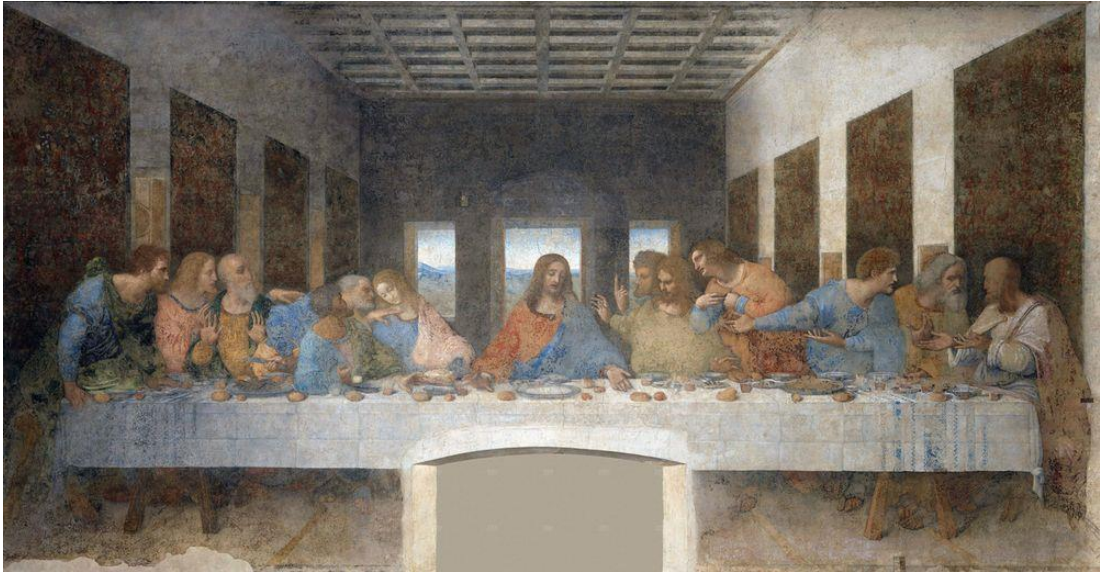
Mona Lisa (c. 1503-19)



Leonardo da Vinci: *Mona Lisa* *Mona Lisa*, oil on wood panel by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1503–19; in the Louvre, Paris.

The world's most famous artwork, the *Mona Lisa* draws thousands of visitors to the [Louvre Museum](#) each day, many of whom are compelled by the sitter's mysterious gaze and enigmatic smile. The seemingly ordinary portrait of a young woman dressed modestly in a thin veil, somber colors, and no jewelry might also confound its viewers, who may wonder what all the fuss is about. The painting's simplicity belies Leonardo's talent for realism. The subject's softly modeled face shows his skillful handling of [sfumato](#), an artistic technique that uses subtle gradations of light and shadow, rather than line, to model form. The delicately painted veil, the finely wrought tresses, and the careful rendering of folded fabric reveal Leonardo's tireless patience in recreating his studied observations. Moreover, the sitter's perplexing expression only adds to her realism. Her smile might be engaging or it might be mocking—[viewers can't quite figure it out](#) because, like a human, she is a complex figure, embodying contrary characteristics simultaneously.

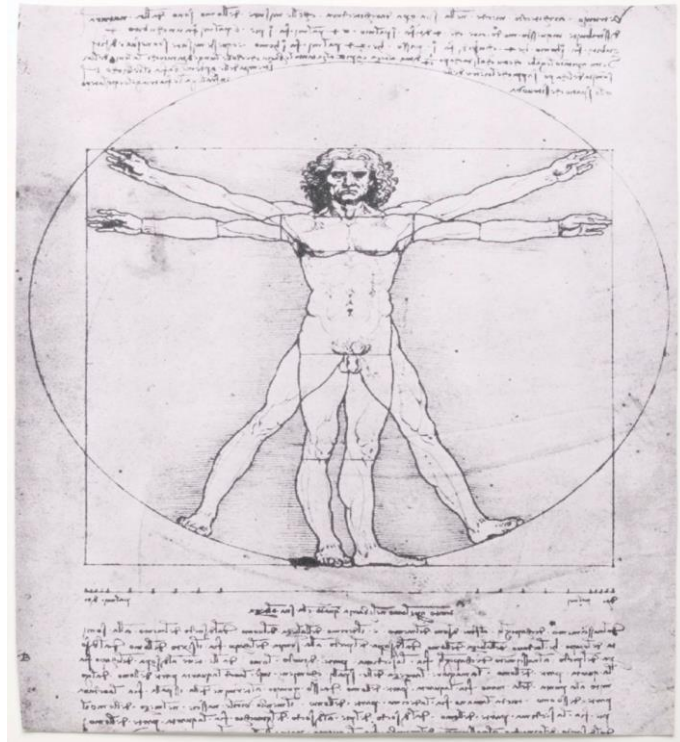
Last Supper (c. 1495–98)



Leonardo da Vinci: *Last Supper*, wall painting by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1495–98, after its 1999 restoration; in Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan.

One of the most famous paintings in the world, the *Last Supper* was commissioned by Ludovico Sforza, duke of Milan and Leonardo's patron during his first stay in that city, for the Dominican monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie. Depicting a sequential narrative, Leonardo illustrates several closely connected moments in the Gospels, including Matthew 26:21–28, in which Jesus declares that one of the Apostles will betray him and then institutes the Eucharist. Leonardo, who was intrigued by the manner in which a man's character can reveal itself in posture, expression, and gesture, depicted each disciple's unique reaction to the declaration. The Apostles' postures rise, fall, extend, and intertwine as they appear to whisper, yell, grieve, and debate around Jesus, who sits serenely in the center. Because of Leonardo's experimental painting technique, in which he used tempera or oil paint on two layers of preparatory ground, the work began to disintegrate soon after he finished it. Viewers, however, can still recognize it as a complex study of varied human emotion, revealed in a deceptively simple composition.

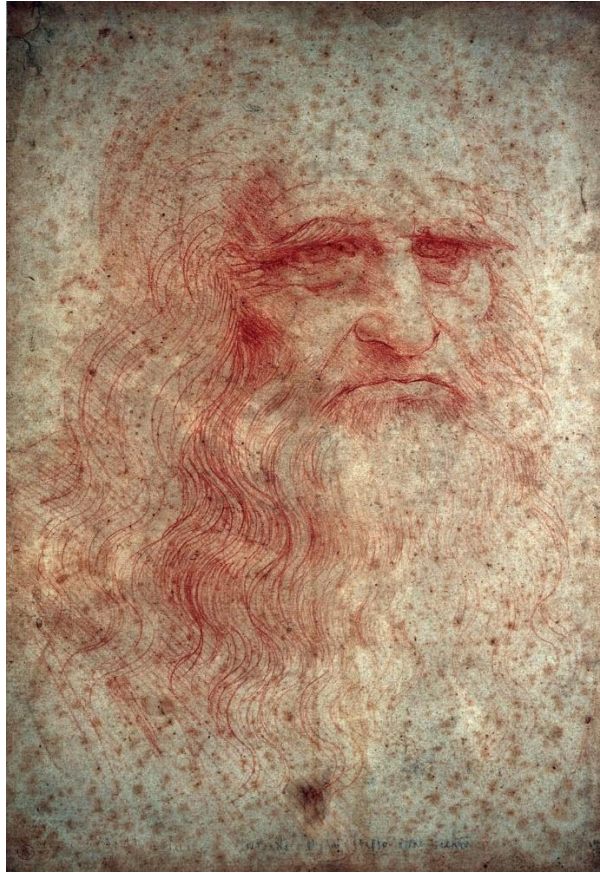
Vitruvian Man (c. 1490)



Leonardo da Vinci: *Vitruvian Man*, drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1490; in the Galleries of the Academy of Venice.

Leonardo's pen-and-ink drawing *Vitruvian Man* comes from one of the many notebooks that he kept on hand during his mature years. It is accompanied by notes, written in mirror script, on the ideal human proportions that the Roman architect Vitruvius laid out in a book on architecture from the 1st century BCE. The drawing illustrates Vitruvius's theory that the ideal human could fit within a circle and a square, two irreconcilable shapes. Leonardo resolved the concept by drawing a male figure in two superimposed positions—one with his arms outstretched to fit in a square and another with his legs and arms spread in a circle. The work shows not only Leonardo's effort to understand significant texts but also his desire to expand on them. He was not the first to illustrate Vitruvius's concepts, but his drawing later became the most iconic, partly because its combination of mathematics, philosophy, and art seemed a fitting symbol of the Renaissance. The drawing is now housed in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, where it is not typically on display but kept in a climate-controlled archive.

Self Portrait (c. 1490/1515-16)



Leonardo da Vinci: self-portrait Self-portrait, drawing by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1490/1515–16; in the Royal Library, Turin, Italy.

Long regarded as a self-portrait, the red chalk drawing of an old man with long wavy hair and a beard has been reproduced to such an extent that it defines how most people think of Leonardo's appearance. Yet some scholars argue that the figure, with its craggy features, furrowed brow, and downcast eyes, appears much older than the age Leonardo ever reached; Leonardo died at age 67. They propose that the drawing may be one of his grotesque drawings, sketches he habitually made in his notebooks of people with eccentric features. Whomever the portrait represents, it is a departure from Leonardo's often captivating subjects, yet he managed to imbue the figure with the nobility and wisdom of a mature age.

The Virgin of the Rocks (c. 1483–86)

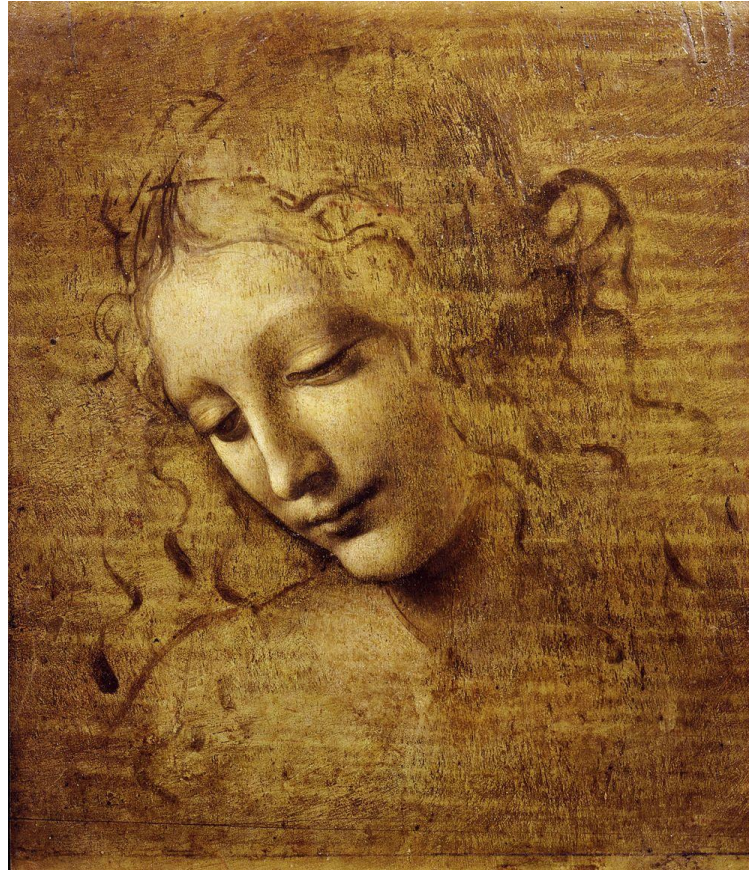


[Leonardo da Vinci](#): *The Virgin of the Rocks**The Virgin of the Rocks*, oil on panel by Leonardo da Vinci, 1483–86; in the Louvre, Paris.

Based on stylistic evidence, many scholars consider the painting [The Virgin of the Rocks](#) in the Louvre the first of two paintings that Leonardo made of an apocryphal legend in which the Holy Family meets [Saint John the Baptist](#) as they flee to Egypt from [Herod](#)'s Massacre of the Innocents. Leonardo was involved in years of litigation with the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, which commissioned the work, and the dispute eventually led Leonardo to paint another version of the subject about 1508, which is now housed in the National Gallery of London.

The first painting shows the ways in which Leonardo ushered in the High [Renaissance](#). Early paintings from this period often depicted figures in linear arrangements, separate from one another, and stiff in form. In *The Virgin of the Rocks*, however, the figures of the [Virgin Mary](#), the Christ Child, the infant John, and an [archangel](#) are arranged in a pyramidal composition, and they not only convincingly occupy a space but interact with one another through gestures and glances. A youthful Mary sits on the ground in a mysterious rocky landscape, not on a throne as so many early Renaissance paintings depicted her. Her body has movement—it seems to sway as she tilts her head protectively toward the infant John, who kneels in prayer at the left, and she looks as if she nudges him over to the Christ Child at the right. Jesus, in turn, blesses John as an archangel, seen in a complex pose from the back, points toward John and glances inscrutably outward at the viewer. Leonardo also notably excluded traditional holy signifiers—[halos](#) for Mary and Christ and a staff for John—so that the Holy Family appears less divine and more human.

Head of a Woman (1500-10)



Leonardo da Vinci: *Head of a Woman* (also called *La Scapigliata*), oil, earth, and white lead pigments on poplar wood by Leonardo da Vinci, 1500–10; in the National Gallery, Parma, Italy.

Head of a Woman, a small brush drawing with pigment, depicts a young woman with her head tilted and her eyes downcast. Her posture recalls the Virgin Mary in Leonardo's *The Virgin of the Rocks*, suggesting that the drawing may have served as a model. The drawing's nickname, *La scapigliata*, translates to "disheveled" and refers to the young woman's wayward strands of hair. The loosely sketched tendrils and shoulders contrast with the highly finished face, where Leonardo gently modeled the woman's delicate features, from her heavy eyelids to her tender lips. It reveals Leonardo's fluid means of working, utilizing both expressive drawing to create form and controlled layering to provide detail.

Lady with an Ermine (c. 1489-91)



Leonardo da Vinci: *Lady with an Ermine*, oil on panel by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1489–91; in the National Museum, Kraków, Poland.

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Many art historians identify the youthful woman in *Lady with an Ermine* as Cecilia Gallerani, the mistress of Leonardo's patron, Ludovico Sforza, duke of Milan. The ermine was often used as an emblem for the duke. The woman turns her head to the right, her bright eyes seemingly directed toward something outside the frame. Although the painting has been heavily overpainted, notably the dark background, it nonetheless reveals Leonardo's knowledge of anatomy and his ability to represent character in posture and expression. He captures the girl's youth and genial nature in her guileless features, attentive gaze, and tender embrace of the ermine, which sits with its head cocked regally and alert. Her slender hand reveals the complicated bone structure beneath the skin, just as the head of the ermine suggests the skull underneath the finely rendered fur.

Salvator Mundi (c. 1500)



Leonardo da Vinci: *Salvator Mundi* *Salvator Mundi*, oil on walnut panel believed to have been painted by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1500.

The head-on portrait of *Salvator Mundi* (c. 1500; "Savior of the World") made headlines in 2017 when it sold for a record-breaking \$450.3 million at auction. The high price was all the more surprising when considering that *Salvator Mundi* was in poor condition, it had a questionable history, and its attribution was a subject of debate among scholars and critics. Many pundits remarked on the poor skill used to represent Jesus' face; the stiff posture, which was so unlike the Renaissance master's characteristic twisting poses; and the unconvincing representation of the glass globe, which, if solid, would have reflected a distorted view of its holder, an optical trick that Leonardo would have known about. Christie's, the auction house that managed the sale, dismissed the criticisms, noting that any lack of craft was the result of heavy restoration in previous centuries and pointed to the soft modeling of Jesus' right hand and the finesse of his tight curls, both characteristics that resembled Leonardo's technique. The auction house also asserted that conservators had confirmed that the painting was made of the same materials that Leonardo would have used, notably ultramarine, an expensive high-quality blue pigment often reserved exclusively for virtuosos. The attribution debate continued well after the sale, but the interest in the work and the large sum paid at auction attested to Leonardo's enduring celebrity and to his powerful position in the art history canon five centuries after his death.

Ginevra de' Benci (c. 1474/78)



Leonardo da Vinci: *Ginevra de' Benci**Ginevra de' Benci*, oil on panel by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1474/78; in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Housed in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the [portrait of Ginevra de' Benci](#) is the only painting by Leonardo publicly displayed in the Western Hemisphere. It is one of Leonardo's earliest works, finished when he was in his early 20s, and shows some of the unconventional methods he would use throughout his career. Inspired by his Northern contemporaries, Leonardo broke with tradition by depicting the solemn young woman in a three-quarter pose rather than the customary profile, and thus he may have been the first Italian artist to paint such a composition. He continued to use the three-quarter view in all of his portraits, including the *Mona Lisa*, and it quickly became the standard for portraiture, so ubiquitous that viewers take it for granted today. Leonardo may also have used his fingers when the paint was still tacky to model Ginevra's face, as suggested by the fingerprints found in the paint surface.

On the reverse side of the painting, a wreath of laurel and palm encircles a sprig of juniper (*ginepro* in Italian—a pun on the sitter's name), and a scroll bearing the Latin phrase "beauty adorns virtue" entwines each of the flora. The truncated appearance of the reverse side suggests that the painting may have been cut at the bottom, possibly because of damage from water or fire. Some scholars speculate that the portrait on the obverse would have included Ginevra's hands and propose that a silverpoint study of arms and hands housed at [Windsor Castle](#) may have served as a preliminary drawing.

The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne (c. 1503–19)



Leonardo da Vinci: *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, oil on wood panel by Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1503–19; in the Louvre, Paris.

Some scholars believe that *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* was Leonardo's last painting, and in this work he used many of the conventions that he had established throughout his career to depict three generations of the Holy Family—Saint Anne, her daughter, the Virgin Mary, and the Christ Child. Anne, at the apex of the pyramidal composition, watches Mary, who sits on her lap, as the Virgin tenderly restrains the Christ Child from mounting a lamb. Contrasting with the knowing infant Leonardo depicted in *The Virgin of the Rocks*, the Christ figure in the *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* appears innocent, demonstrating playful juvenile behavior and showing a trusting expression as he returns his mother's gaze. The interactions between the figures feels intimate and reveals Leonardo's ability to represent convincing human relationships.

The painting also shows Leonardo's lifelong interest in believably representing three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. As in many of Leonardo's paintings, the figures sit amid a fantastical landscape. Using aerial perspective, a technique that he wrote about in his *Treatise on Painting*, Leonardo created the illusion of distance by painting the rocky formations in the background so that they appear blue-gray and less detailed than the landscape of the foreground. He used this technique in many of the landscapes of his earlier works, including the *Mona Lisa* and *The Virgin of the Rocks*.

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https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/leon/hd_leon.htm

<https://www.theartstory.org/artist/da-vinci-leonardo/>

<https://www.britannica.com/story/why-is-the-mona-lisa-so-famous>

Biography of Leonardo da Vinci

Childhood and Education

Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci, widely considered one of the most gifted and inventive men in history, was born in 1452 in a village near the town of Vinci, Tuscany.

The illegitimate son of Piero Fruosino di Antonio da Vinci, a Florentine notary and landlord, and Caterina, a peasant girl (who later married an artisan), Leonardo was brought up on the family estate in Anchiano by his paternal grandfather. His father married a sixteen-year old girl, Albiera, with whom Leonardo was close, but who died at an early age. Leonardo was the oldest of twelve siblings but was never treated as the illegitimate son. Like his siblings, Leonardo received a basic education in reading, writing and arithmetic, but he did not show his great passion for learning until adult life.

Early Training and Work

At the age of fourteen, Leonardo moved to Florence where he began an apprenticeship at the renowned workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio, an artist who himself had been a student of the [Early Renaissance](#) master [Donatello](#). It is a matter of record that Leonardo also visited the nearby workshop of Antonio Pollaiuolo. Verrocchio was an important artist in the court of the Medici, a family noted equally for its political power and its generous patronage of the arts. Indeed, Florence attracted many talented young artists, including Domenico Ghirlandaio, Pietro Perugino, and Lorenzo di Credi and it is indicative of his father's civic standing that Leonardo was able to take up his apprenticeship in such a prestigious workshop.

Although Leonardo gained only a basic grasp of Latin and Greek, Florentine artists of this period were compelled to study the humanities as a way of more fully understanding man's place in the modern world, and Leonardo's curious and skeptical mind was nurtured under Verrocchio's mentorship (as art historian E. H. Gombrich wrote, "At a time when the learned men at the universities relied on the authority of the admired ancient writers, Leonardo, the painter, would never accept what he read without checking it with his own eyes").

Leonardo's name would become closely associated with the intellectual movement/philosophy known as [Renaissance Humanism](#). It promoted a return to the values and ideals of the classical world but also laid emphasis on what it was to "be human". Great focus was placed on "higher" education and the promotion of "civic virtue" in the belief that by reaching one's full potential - which the Renaissance artist achieved by becoming learned in aesthetic beauty, ethics, logic, and scientific and mathematical principles - one could advance civilization. Leonardo would more than measure up to the title of "renaissance man" through his passionate interest in the disciplines of art, anatomy, architecture, geometry, chemistry, and engineering.

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In 1472, after six years of apprenticeship, Leonardo became a member of the Guild of St. Luke, a Florentine group of artists and medical doctors. Although his father had set him up with a workshop of his own, Leonardo - now regarded by many of his peers, according to Gombrich, "as a strange and rather uncanny being" - continued to work with Verrocchio as an assistant for a further four or five years.



Customary to the times, the output of Verrocchio's workshop would have given rise to collaborative efforts between master and apprentice. Two pictures accredited to Verrocchio, *The Baptism of Christ* (1475) and *The Annunciation* (1472-75), are seen by art historians, such as the Renaissance chronicler, [Giorgio Vasari](#), to evidence Leonardo's lighter brush strokes when compared with Verrocchio's heavier hand.

In 1476, Leonardo was accused of sodomy with three other men. Homosexuality was illegal and punishable, not only by imprisonment, but also by public humiliation and even death. Leonardo was acquitted through lack of corroborative evidence, which has been attributed to the fact that his friends/lovers came from powerful Florentine families. Perhaps because of the stigma and chastisement, Leonardo kept a low profile over the next few years, with little or no record of his activities during this time.

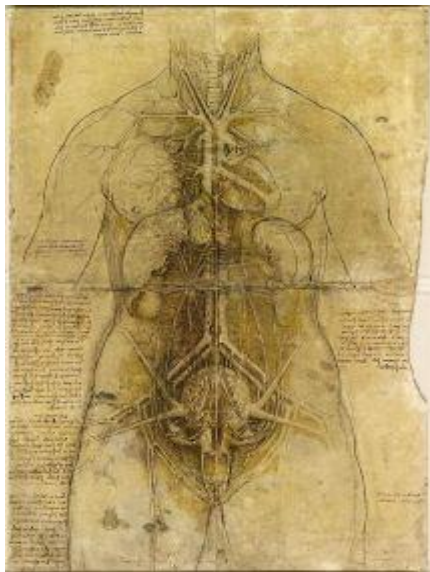
Leonardo's earliest commissions came in 1481 from the monastery of San Donato a Scopeto for a panel painting of the *Adoration of the Magi* (unfinished), and an altar painting for the St. Bernard Chapel in the Palazzo della Signoria (never begun). However, Leonardo stopped work on the commissions to move to Milan after accepting

an offer from the city's Duke to join his court. He was listed in the royal register as *pictor et ingeniarius ducalis* ("painter and engineer of the duke").

There is some speculation as to why the move to Milan was so appealing to the artist when his Florentine career was in the ascendency. It may have been that his decision was to put the earlier sexual scandal behind him. While that may have been a contributory factor, it seems more likely that what the historian Ludwig Heinrich Heydenreich called Leonard's "gracious but reserved personality and elegant bearing" was a better fit for the austere Milanese Court. As Heydenreich writes, "It may have been that the rather sophisticate spirit of Neoplatonism prevailing in the Florence of the Medici went against the grain of Leonardo's experience-oriented mind and that the more strict, academic atmosphere of Milan attracted him. Moreover, he was no doubt enticed by Duke Ludovico Sforza's brilliant court and the meaningful projects awaiting him there".

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Mature Period



Leonardo worked in Milan between 1482 and 1499. Between 1483-86, he worked on the *The Virgin of the Rocks*, an altarpiece commissioned by the Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception. For reasons that are unknown, Leonardo entered into a decade-long legal dispute with the Confraternity (leading Leonardo to paint a second version of the work in 1508). In 1485, he undertook a diplomatic mission to Hungary on behalf of the Duke. He met with the influential Hungarian King, Matthias Corvinus, and worked on preparations for court festivals. While in Hungary he also worked on engineering and architectural plans, including for the dome of the cathedral in Milan.

While in Milan, Leonardo spent a great deal of time observing human anatomy. He closely studied the way in which human bodies moved, the way they were built and proportioned, how they interacted in social engagement and communication, and their habits of gesture and expression. This was a time-consuming and painstaking undertaking that helps explain perhaps why there are so few paintings dating from this period - just six in total, with suggestion of a further three commissions either now lost or never commenced - yet an extraordinarily large library of drawings. These

are now testament to Leonardo's mastery of observation and his ability to convey human emotion.

It was during this period that he experimented with new and different painting techniques. One of the practices Leonardo is most famous for is his ability to create a "smoky" effect, which was coined *sfumato*. Through his deep knowledge of glazes and brushstrokes, he developed the technique, which allowed for edges of color and outline to flow into each other to emphasize the soft modulation of flesh or fabric, as well as the remarkable translucence of hard surfaces such as crystal or the tactility of hair. The intimate authenticity that resulted in his figures and subjects seemed to mirror reality in ways that had not been seen hitherto. A good example of this is his depiction of an orb in the painting *Salvatore Mundi* (1490-1500). It was during this period that Leonardo produced his great fresco masterpiece - what Gombrich called "one of the great miracles wrought by human genius" - *The Last Supper* (1495-98). It was painted on the dining hall wall of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.

As an antidote to the beauty of his great masterpieces, Leonardo produced a series of drawings of deformed faces and bodies, perhaps the most famous of which are *A Bald Fat Man with a Broken Nose* (1485-90), and *Grotesque Head of an old Woman* (1489-90). The art historian Martin Kemp writes that Leonardo sometimes "followed ugly people around and drew them [in the belief] that the beautiful needed the grotesque [...] like light and shade". The art historian Jonathan Jones said of the former, meanwhile, that Leonardo's "repeated doodles of the same archetypal ugly visage [was] sometimes called his 'nutcracker' profile [...] This looks like a real man, and a fairly scary one: a street character, a violent, massive bald guy with a broken nose. And what makes it seem most real is that it is drawn quickly yet decisively, as in a sketch from life".

For his last unfinished project before leaving Milan, Leonardo was commissioned to cast a five-meter-high equestrian bronze sculpture - called *Gran Cavallo* - commemorating Francesco Sforza, the founder of the Sforza dynasty. In 1493, a clay model of the intended sculpture was displayed during the wedding of Emperor Maximilian to Bianca Maria Sforza, emphasizing the importance of the anticipated work. Unfortunately, the project was never finished and the conquering French Army, who had seized Milan in 1499, ended up using Leonardo's model for target practice. It is believed that the bronze reserved to cast the clay sculpture had been repurposed for cannon casting in what proved to be the unsuccessful defense of Milan against Charles VIII in the war with France.

Following the French invasion of Milan, and the overthrow of Duke Sforza in 1499, Leonardo left for Venice accompanied by his childhood friend and future assistant,

Salai. In Venice, Leonardo was employed as a military engineer where his main commission was to design naval defense systems for the city under threat of a Turkish military incursion. Leonardo returned to Florence in 1500, where he received a warm and enthusiastic welcome. He lived as a guest of the Servite monks at the monastery of Santissima Annunziata. Leonardo was employed as a senior architectural advisor for a committee working on a damaged foundation at the church of San Francesco al Monte, but he devoted most of his time to studying mathematics.

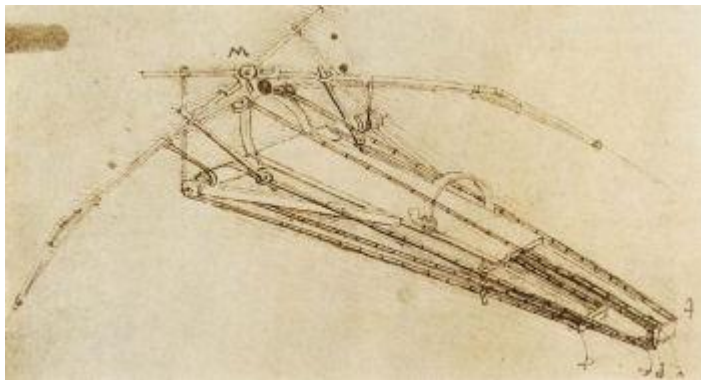
In 1502, Leonardo secured service in the Court of Cesare Borgia, an important member of an influential family, as well as son of Pope Alexander VI, and commander of the papal army. He was employed as a "senior military architect and general engineer" and accompanied Borgia on his travels throughout Italy. His duties included making maps to aid with military defense, as well as designs for the construction of a dam to ensure an uninterrupted supply of water to the canals from the River Arno. During the diversion of the river project, he met Niccolò Machiavelli, who was a noted scribe and political observer for Florence. It has been said that Leonardo introduced Machiavelli to the concepts of applied science, and that he had a great influence on the man who would go on to be called the Father of Modern Political Science.

Leonardo returned for a second time to Florence in the spring of 1503 and was enthusiastically welcomed into the Guild of St. Luke. He worked on landscape sketches for a canal that would bypass the "choppy" Arno River and connect Florence directly with the sea. As Heydenreich notes, "The project, considered time and again in subsequent centuries, was never carried out, but centuries later the express highway from Florence to the sea was built over the exact route Leonardo chose for his canal". His return to Florence also spurred one of the most productive periods of painting for the artist including preliminary work on his *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (1503-19), the mural *Battle of Anghiari* (1503-05) (which was left unfinished and later copied by the artist [Peter Paul Rubens](#)), and what was destined to become the world's most famous portrait, the *Mona Lisa* (1503-19). Of the latter, Gombrich wrote: "What strikes us first is the amazing degree to which Lisa looks alive. She really seems to look at us and to have a mind of her own. Like a living being, she seems to change before our eyes and to look a little different every time we come back to her [...] That great observer of nature knew more about the way we use our eyes than anybody who had ever lived before him".

In 1508, Leonardo returned to Milan where he remained for the next five years enjoying the generous patronage of Charles d'Amboise, the French Governor of Milan, and King Louis XII (of France). He was engaged in architectural projects, with notable commissions such as work on a Villa for Charles, bridge building, a project to create a

waterway to link Milan with Lake Como, and preparatory sketches for an oratory for the church of Santa Maria alla Fontana.

Leonardo ran a successful studio which included his former Milanese pupils, de' Conti and Salai, and new recruits, Cesare da Sesto, Giampetrino, Bernardino Luini, and a young aristocrat named Francesco Meizi. Although he created little as a painter, Leonardo did undertake a second aborted sculptural commission from the military commander, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio. The preparatory sketches for the equestrian sculpture have survived, but the Trivulzio scrapped the project in favor of a more modest design.



Leonardo's second Milan period is best known for his scientific activities. He collaborated with the renowned anatomist, Marcantonio della Torre, which led to Leonardo's precise drawings of the human body and his excursions in comparative anatomy (differences between

species) and the related field of physiology. Meanwhile, his manuscripts of this time included mathematic, mechanical, geological, optical, and botanical studies. He created plans for his famous flying machine, and also devised military weapons such as an early example of the machine gun and a large crossbow. Gombrich suggested that there were two reasons that Leonardo "never published his writings, and that very few can even have known of their existence." The first was because "he was left-handed and had taken to writing from right to left so that his notes can only be read in a mirror". The second relates to the possibility that Leonardo "was afraid of divulging his discoveries [such as his observation the 'the sun does not move'] for fear that his opinions would be found heretical".

It was also during the second Milan period that Leonardo and Francesco Melzi, his favorite pupil, became close companions and remained so until Leonardo's death. It may be reasonably surmised that at this point in his life, Leonardo was finally able to live discreetly as a gay man, his accomplishments and acclaim providing a safe shelter from the kind of traumatic and punitive stigmatization he experienced in his earlier years in Florence.

Late Period



In 1513, after the temporary expulsion of the French from Milan, the sixty-year-old Leonardo relocated, taking Salai and Melzi with him, to Rome where he spent the next three years. He was given a generous stipend and residence in the Vatican by the Giuliano de' Medici, the brother of Leo X, the new pope. It was a depressing time for Leonardo, however, who struggled to secure any meaningful commissions. As Heydenreich writes, Leonardo arrived in Rome "at a time of great artistic activity: [Donato Bramante](#) was building St. Peter's, [Raphael](#) was painting the last rooms of the pope's new apartments, [Michelangelo](#) was struggling to complete the tomb of Pope Julius II, and many younger artists, such as Timoteo Viti and Sodoma, were also active".

Heydenreich refers to "drafts of embittered letters" which confirmed Leonardo's disquiet and unhappiness which restricted his activities largely to "mathematical studies and technical experiments or surveyed ancient monuments as he strolled through the city". However, Leonardo did produce a "magnificently executed map of the Pontine Marshes" and drawings for a planned Florentine residence for the Medici (who had returned to power in 1512).

While in Rome he also made the acquaintance of King François I of France who offered Leonardo the permanent position of "first painter, architect and engineer to the King" at the French Royal Court. François is credited with doing more than any other individual to promote Renaissance art and architecture in France and Leonardo, having accepted the King's invitation, lived out the last three years of his life (with Melzi) at a small, but palatial, residence at Clos Lucé, close to the king's residence at Château d'Amboise. Leonardo brought with him a large cache of paintings and drawings, most of which stayed in France after his death (and which are now housed in Le Louvre as part of the world's largest single collection of Leonardo's art).



Leonardo did little painting in France, although his last painting, *St John the Baptist* (1513), was most likely made during this time. He worked on landscape plans for the palace gardens but all new work was abruptly halted following a region-wide outbreak of malaria. Leonardo found time to edit his scientific papers and to prepare his treatise on painting,

including his *Visions of the End of the World* series which included his many cataclysmic storm drawings, known as the *Deluges*.

During these years, Leonardo and King François formed a close friendship - Vasari wrote that "The King ... was accustomed frequently and affectionately to visit him" - and, although he died shortly before construction began in earnest, it is likely that Leonardo designed the now famous double-helix staircase (two concentric spirals wind separately around a central column, allowing guests to pass without meeting while still being able to see one another through windows placed in a central column) of the Chateau de Chambord, a lavish Renaissance Chateau, commissioned by François (and which took 28 years to complete). Leonardo died on May 2, 1519 at Clos Lucé, naming Melzi as principal beneficiary of his estate.

It is down to Melzi's efforts that Leonardo's notebooks and drawings were saved. After Leonardo's death, Melzi returned to Milan where he was visited by Vasari. Referring to Melzi as his "much beloved" pupil, Vasari wrote that "he holds them [the notebooks] dear, and keeps such papers together as if they were relics". Leonardo's vineyards (sixteen rows) in Milan, a gift to Leonardo from Sforza in 1482 (confiscated during the French invasion but returned to Leonardo's ownership at a later unknown date) were divided between Salai and a former servant. (The vineyards remain an ongoing concern and a Leonardo Museum to this day.)



The reverence with which Leonardo was regarded is epitomized by the apocryphal story of François I's attendance at his death. Vasari described Leonardo as having "breathed [his] last in the arms of the king". Their legendary friendship inspired the 1818 painting by [Ingres](#), *François I Receives the Last Breaths of Leonardo da Vinci*,

in which Leonardo is shown as dying in the arms of the King.

Leonardo was originally interred in the chapel of St Florentin at the Chateau d'Amboise in the Loire Valley, but the building was destroyed during the French revolution. Although it is believed that he was reburied in the smaller chapel of St Hubert, Amboise, the exact location remains unconfirmed.

The Legacy of Leonardo da Vinci



Leonardo's list of achievements is extensive. As a defining figure of the High Renaissance, he helped usher in a new dawning in Western art and civilization. Amongst his most influential techniques were his pioneering use of vanishing points, the soft clouding effect in his signature [sfumato](#) method, his profound understanding of the dynamics between light and dark in [chiaroscuro](#), and the enigmatic facial expressions of his figures that created a mesmerizing and realistic quality. One can add to his paintings, his inventions, his precise anatomical and topographical drawings, as well as hydraulic and mechanical designs and his architectural achievements.

It is hard to encapsulate the achievements of an artist who, in the words of art historian Martin Kemp, had "got such a grip on people's imagination - whether they're engineers, medics, fans of art, or whatever". Nevertheless, Kemp gives us a good insight into Leonardo's genius through his account of the "spine tingling" privilege of studying the *Mona Lisa* on an easel (the painting having been temporarily released from its bulletproof glass casing). Kemp had been worried that the painting might have lost something of its uniqueness because of its excessive fame and overexposure. He need not have worried. "There is a sense of something happening between the picture and yourself", he said, and while acknowledging that his assessment "sounds entirely pretentious [...] it does happen". Kemp argued indeed, that when in the presence of the original work, "The picture becomes a kind-of living thing", and that any attempt to offer an analysis of *Mona Lisa's* aura was, in the end, a somewhat futile exercise.



Why is the *Mona Lisa* so Famous?

<https://www.britannica.com/story/why-is-the-mona-lisa-so-famous>

Five centuries after [Leonardo da Vinci](#) painted the *Mona Lisa* (1503-19), the portrait hangs behind bulletproof glass within the [Louvre Museum](#) and draws thousands of jostling spectators each day. It is the most famous painting in the world, and yet, when viewers manage to see the artwork up close, they are likely to be baffled by the small subdued portrait of an ordinary woman. She's dressed modestly in a translucent veil, dark robes, and no jewelry. Much has been said about her smile and gaze, but viewers still might wonder what all the fuss is about. Along with the mysteries of the sitter's identity and her enigmatic look, the reason for the work's popularity is one of its many conundrums. Although many theories have attempted to pinpoint one reason for the art piece's celebrity, the most compelling arguments insist that there is no one explanation. The *Mona Lisa*'s fame is the result of many chance circumstances combined with the painting's inherent appeal.



There is no doubt that the [Mona Lisa](#) is a very good painting. It was highly regarded even as Leonardo worked on it, and his contemporaries copied the then novel three-quarter pose. The writer [Giorgio Vasari](#) later extolled Leonardo's

ability to closely imitate nature. Indeed, the *Mona Lisa* is a very realistic portrait. The subject's softly sculptural face shows Leonardo's skillful handling of [sfumato](#), an artistic technique that uses subtle gradations of light and shadow to model form, and shows his understanding of the skull beneath the skin. The delicately painted veil, the finely wrought tresses, and the careful rendering of folded fabric reveal Leonardo's studied observations and inexhaustible patience. And, although the sitter's steady gaze and restrained smile were not regarded as mysterious until the 19th century, viewers today can appreciate her equivocal expression. Leonardo painted a complex figure that is very much like a complicated human.

Many scholars, however, point out that the excellent quality of the *Mona Lisa* was not enough by itself to make the painting a celebrity. There are, after all, many good paintings. External events also contributed to the artwork's fame. That the painting's home is the Louvre, one of the world's most-visited museums, is a fortuitous circumstance that has added to the work's stature. It arrived at the Louvre via a circuitous path beginning with [Francis I](#), king of France, in whose court Leonardo spent the last years of his life. The painting became part of the royal collection, and, for centuries after, the portrait was secluded in French palaces until the [Revolution](#) claimed the royal collection as the property of the people. Following a stint in [Napoleon](#)'s bedroom, the *Mona Lisa* was installed in the Louvre Museum at the turn of the 19th century. As patronage of the Louvre grew, so too did recognition of the painting.

The identity of the portrait's sitter soon became more intriguing. Although many scholars believe that the painting depicts Lisa Gherardini, wife of the Florentine merchant Francesco del Giocondo, no records of such a commission from Francesco exist, and the sitter has never been conclusively identified. The unknown identity has thus lent the figure to whatever characterization people wanted to make of her. During the [Romantic era](#) of the 19th century, the simple Florentine housewife who may have been portrayed was transformed into a mysterious seductress. The French writer [Théophile Gautier](#) described her as a "strange being...her gaze promising unknown pleasures," while others went on about her perfidious lips and enchanting smile. The English author [Walter Pater](#) went so far as to call her a vampire who "has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave." The air of mystery that came to surround

the *Mona Lisa* in the 19th century continues to define the painting and draw speculation.

Meanwhile, the 19th century also mythologized Leonardo as a genius. Throughout the centuries after his death, he was well regarded—but no more so than his esteemed contemporaries [Michelangelo](#) and [Raphael](#). Some scholars have noted, however, that, as interest in the [Renaissance](#) grew in the 19th century, Leonardo became more popularly seen not only as a very good painter but also as a great scientist and inventor whose designs prefigured contemporary inventions. Many of his so-called inventions were later debunked, and his contributions to science and architecture came to be seen as small, but the myth of Leonardo as a genius has continued well into the 21st century, contributing to the *Mona Lisa*'s popularity.

The writers of the 19th century aroused interest in the *Mona Lisa*, but the theft of the painting in 1911 and the ensuing media frenzy brought it worldwide attention. When news of the crime broke on August 22 of that year, it caused an immediate sensation. People flocked to the Louvre to gape at the empty space where the painting had once hung, the museum's director of paintings resigned, accusations of a hoax splashed across newspapers, and [Pablo Picasso](#) was even arrested as a suspect! Two years later the painting was found in Italy after an art dealer in Florence alerted the local authorities that a man had contacted him about selling it. The man was Vincenzo Peruggia, an Italian immigrant to France, who had briefly worked at the Louvre fitting glass on a selection of paintings, including the *Mona Lisa*. He and two other workers took the portrait from the wall, hid with it in a closet overnight, and ran off with it in the morning. Unable to sell the painting because of the media attention, Peruggia hid it in the false bottom of a trunk until his capture. He was tried, convicted, and imprisoned for the theft while the painting toured Italy before it made its triumphant return to the Louvre. By then, many French people had come to regard the work as a national treasure that they had lost and recovered.

The *Mona Lisa* was certainly more famous after the heist, but [World War I](#) soon consumed much of the world's attention. Some scholars argue that [Marcel Duchamp](#)'s playful defacement of a postcard reproduction in 1919 brought attention back to the *Mona Lisa* and started a trend that would make the painting one of the most-recognized in the world. He played against the worship of art

when he drew a beard and mustache on the lady's face and added the [acronym](#) L.H.O.O.Q. (meant to evoke a vulgar phrase in French) at the bottom. That act of irreverence caused a small scandal, and other cunning artists recognized that such a gag would bring them attention. For decades after, other artists, notably [Andy Warhol](#), followed suit. As artists distorted, disfigured, and played with reproductions of the *Mona Lisa*, cartoonists and admen exaggerated her further still. Over the decades, as technology improved, the painting was endlessly reproduced, sometimes manipulated and sometimes not, so that the sitter's face became one of the most well known in the world, even to those who had little interest in art.

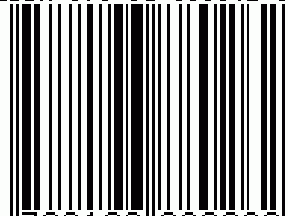
A tour of the painting to the United States in 1963 and to Japan in 1974 elevated it to celebrity status. The *Mona Lisa* traveled to the United States in no less than a first-class cabin on an ocean liner and drew about 40,000 people a day to the [Metropolitan Museum](#) in New York City and the [National Gallery of Art](#) in Washington, D.C., during the portrait's six-week stay. Large crowds greeted the portrait in Japan about ten years later. What's more, as travel has become increasingly affordable since the late 20th century, more and more individuals have been able to visit Paris and pay their respects in person, contributing to the unyielding crowds of today.

Although the *Mona Lisa* is undoubtedly good art, there is no single reason for its celebrity. Rather, it is hundreds of circumstances—from its fortuitous arrival at the Louvre to the mythmaking of the 19th century to the endless reproductions of the 20th and 21st centuries—that have all worked together with the painting's inherent appeal to make the *Mona Lisa* the world's most famous painting ever.





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